

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 122979
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TO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
USMISSION GENEVA

S E C R E T STATE 122979

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, NP

SUBJECT: OPIUM-NEPAL
REF: KATHMANDU 2089

1. WE ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT REFTEL REPORT OF CONFIRMED POPPY CULTIVATION IN NEPAL, AS WELL AS INDICATIONS THAT GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL MAY BE EXPLORING THE IDEA OF ESTABLISHING LEGAL PRODUCTION. WE HAVE IN MIND CALLING IN AMBASSADOR KHATRI AT A HIGH LEVEL, WITH PARALLEL DEMARCHE BY CHARGE IN KATHMANDU, TO CONVEY OUR CONCERN OVER THESE REPORTS, ASK FOR CONFIRMATION OR CLARIFICATION FROM HMG,
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AND UNDERLINE HOW SERIOUSLY WE WOULD VIEW THE EMERGENCE OF NEPAL AS A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF OPIUM. IT WOULD NOT SEEM TO BE APPROPRIATE AT THIS STAGE TO ALLUDE DIRECTLY TO POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT BY THE ROYAL FAMILY.

2. WE WOULD CONTEMPLATE TALKING POINTS ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES: (A) WE HAVE BEGUN TO RECEIVE FOR THE FIRST TIME

SERIOUS REPORTS THAT OPIUM POPPIES ARE BEING CULTIVATED IN WESTERN NEPAL, AND WOULD APPRECIATE HMG INDICATION OF WHETHER THIS IS SO AND WHAT IT PLANS TO DO ABOUT THIS UNDER THE NARCOTICS CONTROL ACT; (B) IN LIGHT OF OUR LONG-STANDING

CONCERN WITH CONTROLLING NARCOTICS TRAFFIC, THE EMERGENCE OF NEPAL AS A SOURCE OF ILLICIT OPIUM WOULD RAISE A POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PROBLEM IN OUR OTHERWISE SMOOTH BILATERAL RELATIONS; (C) WE BELIEVE THE PROPER APPROACH TO OPIUM IS TO DISCOURAGE THE SPREAD OF POPPY CULTIVATION, AND THEREFORE WE ARE CONCERNED BY INDICATIONS THAT HMG MAY BE CONSIDERING SOME FORM OF LEGALIZED PRODUCTION; (D) WE DO NOT BELIEVE LEAK-PROOF LICIT PRODUCTION OF OPIUM COULD BE SET UP IN NEPAL, AND THEREFORE WOULD VIEW ANY ENCOURAGEMENT OF LICIT PRODUCTION AS INEVITABLY RESULTING IN INCREASED ILLICIT PRODUCTION FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC; (E) IN VIEW OF ATTITUDES TOWARD NARCOTICS IN THE U.S., IF NEPAL CAME TO BE PERCEIVED AS INDIFFERENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO CONTROL OPIUM PRODUCTION, U.S. AID TO NEPAL WOULD BE CALLED INTO QUESTION, IN CONGRESS AND ELSEWHERE; (F) PRESIDENT CARTER IS VERY CONCERNED OVER THE INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL PROBLEM AND THIS MATTER RANKS AS A PRIORITY ISSUE IN U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS; (G) WE HOPE AMBASSADOR KHATRI WILL CONVEY TO HIS GOVERNMENT HOW SERIOUSLY WE VIEW THIS WHOLE SUBJECT, AND IN DUE COURSE LET US KNOW HOW HMG INTENDS TO PROCEED IN THIS AREA.

3. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR VIEWS ON WHETHER THE APPROACH
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OUTLINED ABOVE IS THE MOST APPROPRIATE WAY TO DEAL WITH YOUR POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PROBLEM. WELCOME EMBASSY'S SUGGESTIONS/COMMENTS. VANCE

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